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Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT KHARTOUM 3335 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BONN BRUSSELS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, PORG, OAU, XA, ET, SU
SUBJECT: OAU SUMMIT: ETHIOPIA/SUDAN MEDIATION COMMISSION

REF: KHARTOUM 3046 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: STATUS OF ETHIOPIAN-SUDANESE RELATIONS WAS NOT GREATLY AFFECTED BY OAU SUMMIT DELIBRATIONS AND THERE STILL APPEARS DESIRE ON BOTH PARTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. HOWEVER DIFFICULT PROBLEMS OVER ERITREA AND APPROACH TO SOLUTION OF QUESTION REMAIN AS MAJOR OBSTACLES TO SUCH AN IMPROVEMENT. SUMMIT RECOMMENDED OAU MEDIATION EFFORTS SHOULD CONTINUE AND ALSO EXAMINE "ROOT CAUSES" OF TENSION IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. END SUMMARY
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1. ETHIOPIA/SUDAN MEDIATION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, SIERRA LEONE FONMIN CONTEH, PRESENTED TO SUMMIT RESULTS OF TWO MEETINGS IN FREETOWN (DEC 77) AND DAR ES SALAAM (JUNE 78). CONTEH ASSERTED "CONSIDERABLE" PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE TOWARD ALLEVIATING TENSION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES AND RE-ESTABLISHING NORMAL RELATIONS. HE CITED REACTIVATION OF

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AIR LINKS, REVIVAL OF JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE AND
REDUCTION OF HOSTILE MEDIA AS EXAMPLES OF THIS PROGRESS.

2. SUDANESE PRES NIMEIRI, AS HEAD OF SUDANESE DELEGATION,
THANKED COMMITTEE AND NOTED ETHIO-SUDANESE RELATIONS WERE
STRAINED, ONLY BECAUSE OF ERITREAN QUESTION", WHICH COULD
ONLY BE SETTLED THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS. NIMEIRI ASSERTED
ETHIOPIA COULD NOT FULLY APPRECIATE ERITREAN ISSUE, DESPITE
SUDANESE INITIATIVES AND THOSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO ACHIEVE
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. NIMEIRI FURTHER CLAIMED THAT ETHIOPIAN
POSITION THAT ERITREA WAS DOMESTIC PROBLEM IS ERRONEOUS.
HE ADDED THAT ERITREAN QUESTION "THREATENS SECURITY AND
PEACE IN CONTINENT AND ENCOURAGES FOREIGN INTERVENTION."

3. NIGERIAN PRES. OBASANJO SUPPORTED NIMEIRI TO SOME
DEGREE BY STRESSING TENURE OF MEDIATION COMMITTEE BE
EXTENDED AND EXPANDED IN SCOPE TO INCLUDE ERITREAN QUESTION.
HOWEVER, ETHIOPIAN FONMIN FELEKE NATURALLY REJECTED DISCUSSION
OF ERITREA, SAYING IT WAS INTERNAL MATTER AND NEITHER
OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS NOR OAU MEDIATION COMMISSION AND
NOT EVEN OAU SUMMIT WAS ENTITLED TO CONSIDER IT. NIMEIRI
REJOINED THAT ERITREA WAS NOT AN INTERNAL MATTER AND "ITS
FILE IS STILL BEING MAINTAINED BY UN FOR CONSIDERATION."
OBASANJO CONCLUDED DEBATE BY URGING MEDIATION COMMISSION
CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS AND THAT IT EXAMINE ALL ASPECTS OF
THE PROBLEM.
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4. SUMMIT ADOPTED RESOLUTION EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR
EFFORTS OF COMMISSION AND REQUESTING THAT IT CONTINUE ITS
WORK, BEARING IN MIND "ROOT CAUSES OF THE DISPUTE AND
RUGENT NEED FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN REGION." NIMEIRI
EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH ETHIOPIAN HEAD OF
STATE MENGISTU "AT ANY PLACE, AT ANY TIME."

5. COMMENT: WHILE SUDAN GAINED SOME SUPPORT FOR ITS
POSITION ON ERITREA, IT WAS MORE IN CONTEXT OF FINDING
PEACEFUL SOLUTION AND PRE-EMPTING FOREIGN INTERVENTION, THAN
ACCEPTANCE OF ERITREAN QUESTION AS NON-INTERNAL MATTER.
IT DOES NOT APPEAR OAU WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE MUCH MORE
"CONSIDERABLE" PROGRESS IN ITS MEDIATION, BEYOND WHAT
IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED THUS FAR AND RESOLUTION WILL BE LEFT
TO INVOLVED PARTIES DIRECTLY. ETHIOPIAN FONMIN FELEKE MET
FOR 2 HOURS WITH SUDANESE VICE-PRES. ABU AL-GASSIM JULY 23
AND THEY MAY HAVE WORKED OUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR MENGISTU-
NIMEIRI MEETING OR FURTHER MODALITIES TO EASE TENSION
BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. RELIABLE INFORMATION ON MEETING IS
NOT AVAILABLE. BERGUS. UNQUOTE VANCE

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